

# Analecta Husserliana

The Yearbook of  
Phenomenological Research

Volume CXXII



Phenomenology of the Object  
and Human Positioning

Human, Non-Human and Posthuman

Edited by

Calley A. Hornbuckle

Jadwiga S. Smith

William S. Smith

 Springer

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The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research

Volume CXXII

## **Series Editors**

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Editors


# Phenomenology of the Object and Human Positioning


Human, Non-Human and Posthuman

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# Contents

## Part I Homage to Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka

<b>The Subject/Object Relationship According to the Phenomenology of Life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka: Discovering the Metamorphic Logos of the Ontopoiesis of Life</b> . . . . .	3
Daniela Verducci	

<b>Otherness and the Case of the Animal-Human: Interrogating the Post-human from Tymieniecka's Ontopoiesis Multilayered Organization of Life</b> . . . . .	21
Sergio Labate	

<b>The Poiesis of Thought</b> . . . . .	35
Antonio Domínguez Rey	

## Part II Transcendental Idealism: Investigation Continues

<b>Ecce Zarathustra: Nietzsche's Answer to the Human</b> . . . . .	65
Marcella Tarozzi Goldsmith	

<b>Phenomenology and Formal Ontology: A Theoretical Model of Max Scheler's Early Phenomenology of Sense Perception</b> . . . . .	71
Martina Properzi	

<b>Puzzles in Phenomenology</b> . . . . .	87
Lucian Delescu	

## Part III Politics/Social Issues/Question of Universality

<b>Freedom and the Human Positioning in the Lifeworld: The Transcendence-Immanence Contrast in Simone de Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism</b> . . . . .	101
Natasha Kiran and Abdul Rahim Afaki	

<b><i>Brave New World: A Confinement Between Mythical and Behaviourist World-Views</i></b> .....	135
Aydan Turanli	
<b>The Thing/Beast/Human Relationships in the Autobiographies of Camara Laye and Wole Soyinka</b> .....	151
Tony E. Afejuku	
<b>Part IV Art and the Question of Humanity</b>	
<b>The Force of Things Unknown</b> .....	165
Christopher S. Schreiner	
<b>Paul Klee's <i>Ad Parnassum</i> and the Reworking of Consciousness</b> .....	181
Bruce Ross	
<b>Transhuman and Posthuman in Popular Culture on the Basis of Miura Kentarō's <i>Berserk</i></b> .....	191
Natalia Kućma	
<b>The Work of Art as a Living System: A Deweyan Approach</b> .....	203
Stefano Polenta	
<b>Part V Human/Beast/Object</b>	
<b>The Beast vs. Human</b> .....	225
John Nelson Balsavich	
<b>The Situation of Human Being in Nature According to Fedor Dostoyevsky, Thomas Mann, and Robert Musil: A Paradoxical Builder, Self-Enhancing Being and Speaking-Animal</b> .....	235
Michel Dion	
<b>Objects and "Objects" in the Historical Narration of the Humanities and Jean Baudrillard's Semiotical (Structuralist) Contribution</b> .....	249
Piotr Mróz	
<b>A Criticism of the Current Subjectivist Totemism in Werner Herzog's <i>Grizzly Man</i></b> .....	267
Victor G. Rivas López	
<b>Part VI Human/Nature/Cosmos</b>	
<b>Towards a Hermeneutic of the Artificial</b> .....	287
Marie Antonios Sassine	
<b>Apeiron Civilization: The Irruption of Infinity in Science and the Universe</b> .....	297
Ion Soteropoulos	
<b>Man as the <i>Ambassador of the Cosmos</i>: Henryk Skolimowski's Concept</b> .....	323
Anna Małecka and Katarzyna Stark	

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In the early 1980s, Dr. Smith began working with Dr. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka and became a major collaborator in the World Phenomenology Institute. After Dr. Tymieniecka's death, Dr. Smith became the WPI President for the American Division. She continues this important work today, organizing and administering conferences, conducting and leading conferences, and editing volumes of the *Analecta Husserliana: The Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*. Dr. Smith remains a vital, enthusiastic, inspiring link in the World Phenomenology Institute where she encourages younger scholars to pursue phenomenological studies.

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**Part I**  
**Homage to Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka**

# The Subject/Object Relationship According to the Phenomenology of Life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka: Discovering the Metamorphic Logos of the Ontopoiesis of Life



Daniela Verducci

## 1 Introduction

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka did not limit herself to extending the field of phenomenological inquiry to the phenomenology of life. Her phenomenology of life opens a new horizon of meaning for facing the serious problems of our times, connected with the dis-communication between subject and object, such as the questions related to environmental sustainability and post-humanism. Practicing the phenomenology of life, A.-T. Tymieniecka discovered both, life as the objective interweaving between human condition and nature, and the auto-individualizing logos of life as the formative and propulsive force, which is intrinsic to becoming in all its forms. This logos is creative and po(i)etic, according to the terminology of Aristotle's *Poetics* (1996), or better, it is onto-poietic, because it gives rise to the creation-of-being, activating the dynamics of self-individualization of being itself at every level. In the perspective of life, the subject-object dualism appears recomposed, as we can phenomenologically show that there is a unique auto-individualizing logos/force, which leads the becoming in every its forms. The logos of life as sentient and metamorphic is different from the modern rationalistic logos, which, on the contrary, is fixed and extrinsic to life, limited to imposing reduced frameworks to cage the infinitely faceted fluidity of living. However, the logos of life is equally capable to weave that web of meaning that "saves" the new phenomena that appear before our eyes from the dispersion and senselessness to which they are condemned by post-modern deconstructionism and nihilism. Effectively, Tymieniecka, focusing the ontopoietic logos of life, was able to exhibit a real—not only logic—poietic continuity between the constructivism of natural life and the creative evolution of human life. But, despite having achieved such a metaphysical maturity of the logos, a fur-

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ther dualism between nature and super-nature challenged the phenomenology of life. At this point, the metamorphic quality of the logos of life played a decisive role, because it allowed the unique logos to vary its own form according to the vectors that support its enaction, be they the laws of physics, the animal instinct or man's creative imagination and will. It was precisely by assuming the human will as its new vehicle that the onto-poietic logos of life was able to advance from the vital/onto-poietic round of significance into two new dominions of sense: that of the creative/spiritual and that of the sacred. Herefrom, the onto-poiesis of life opened to the transformative advance of the Great Metamorphosis, that completes life's meaning in a transition from temporal life to hyper-temporality, combining every residual dualism. The path of a New Enlightenment opens out before us and the metaphysical enterprise is once again within our grasp.

## 2 The Dualistic Phase of the Subject-Object Relationship

The subject-object relationship, that reached in the twentieth century, profoundly suffered the dualisms of philosophical Modernity, principally that of Descartes, which divided the ontological field between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, and that of Kant, which separated phenomonic appearance and noumenal thingness. Over the centuries and into our times, further dichotomies and polarizations have been added, among them those between intuition and concept, faith and knowledge, sciences of nature and sciences of the spirit, theory and practice, nature and culture, base and superstructure, the conscious and the unconscious, consciousness and world, mind and brain, the élite management/owners and categories kept in a state of inferiority/workers, and so on, in an infinite series of oppositions which, according to the French sociologist Alain Touraine, are nothing other than exemplifications of the fundamental, radical and paralyzing fracture between spirit and life that has been produced through the modern metaphysical conception (2006: 66).

Precisely in this sense, A.-T. Tymieniecka addressed the problem of the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, working to resolve the disconnection that afflicts it. In fact, she entitled "Logos and Life" the editorial series that includes her first set of four works, published with Kluwer of Dordrecht, beginning in 1988 with books 1 and 2, respectively: *Creative experience and the critique of reason (Analecta Husserliana 24)* (Tymieniecka, 1988) and *The Three movement of the soul (Analecta Husserliana 25)*; then with book 3 in 1990, *The passions of the soul and the elements in onto-poiesis of culture (Analecta Husserliana 28)*, and closing with the description of the meta-onto-poiesis of life in the monumental book 4 of 2000, *Impetus and Equipoise in the Life-Strategies of Reason (Analecta Husserliana 70)* (Tymieniecka, 2000).

Tymieniecka lucidly perceived that the pulsing heart of every correlation appears inaccessible to us: we feel hermeneutically confined and immobilized by the bronze chains of a metaphysics that does not want to deal with "the abundance and variety that our present state of human experience reveals, to say nothing of the expanding

perspectives on our horizons” (Tymieniecka, 2009: xxvi) as would be needed to face the problems related to the environment, development, and post-humanism. Even though Max Scheler amply demonstrated how the phenomenon of *Wechsel* (= exchange/interrelation) pervades not only the sphere of the humans and the living being, but also the entire cosmos (Scheler, 1954: 475–476), A.-T. Tymieniecka observes that “the most concretely felt concern emergent at the present, and this is universally so, is with ‘communication’” (Tymieniecka, 2005: xxv).

It seemed that Edmund Husserl’s phenomenological reflection with the dual devices of *epochè* and intuition of essences overcame the dualistic format of Modern philosophy (Landgrebe, 1961–1962: 133–177) and, with the discovery of the consciousness’ constituting intentionality, reached a unified vision of the subject-object relationship, such that in his 32nd lecture in the winter semester of 1923–1924, now in *Erste Philosophie II* (Husserl, 1959: 40), he could use as the starting point for the attainment of the suitable and apodictic evidence of knowledge the statement: “I am—the world is” (Tymieniecka, 2005: xix).

Throughout his life of thought, Husserl always strove to reach the goal of the absolute beginning of philosophizing, but never attained its completion. He understood where the various historical attempts had run aground while seeking an ultimate philosophical clarification of the foundations of our knowledge and experience: from Socrates and Plato onwards, philosophers ended up in skepticism and subjectivism because they misunderstood the nature of cognitive subjectivity, reducing it to the psychological, naturalistic or historicist sense. According to Husserl, only phenomenological reduction can open us to the authentic transcendental subjectivity in which objective reason is constituted.

The Italian phenomenologist Vincenzo Costa delineates with great expressive lucidity the features of this transcendental subjectivity where objective reason is constituted. It is the place of manifestness in general, the place where things manifest themselves, where reality itself becomes a phenomenon and announces itself (Costa, 2007: xii), but, as A.-T. Tymieniecka notes, this transcendental subjectivity “doesn’t meet its intrinsic postulates and calls for a further step of interrogation” (Tymieniecka, 2005: xxxiii).

In her recent book, *The Sense of the Things*, Angela Ales Bello, longtime friend of A.-T. Tymieniecka, does not seem to be aware of the metaphysical-foundational question that arises precisely from the constituent stabilization of the phenomenological ontology in which subject and object, consciousness and world, spirit and life are so functionally connected and at the same time imprisoned.

It is true that Husserl’s passage in the 1920s from the static phenomenological method, focused on the analysis of pure consciousness, to the genetic one (Husserl, 1973a: 336–346; 1973b: 613–633), “through which consciousness reveals the basic internal temporality of the constitutive moment” (Tymieniecka, 2005: xxxii), opens transcendental consciousness to the pre-categorical sphere, on the *hylectic* basis of passive syntheses, to the world-of-life, showing, as Angela Ales Bello concludes, how transcendental idealism can be converted into a kind of transcendental realism (Ales Bello, 2015: 97–106).

However, there remains unanswered the crucial theoretical question which, as formulated by Max Scheler, asks: How must the foundation of the world be in order for the present phenomenon of this reciprocal conversion of idealism and realism to be founded? Without finding an answer to this question, the phenomenon highlighted “hangs in the air” (Tymieniecka, 2005: xxxiii); as it is not supported by any network of apodicticity, therefore it still needs to be saved from fluctuation and dispersion.

And effectively, as Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka observed in the inaugural speech of the 2005 Conference in Oxford dedicated to the *Logos of Phenomenology and Phenomenology of Logos*, precisely at this point, “when Husserl arrived to investigate the incipient phase of the constituent logos, after having traversed the entire circuit of it and approached it from the eidetic summit” (xxxii), he saw the explosion of “the drama” of the constituting intentionality of consciousness, which functioned as “a bastion of the human mind, playing an exclusive dominating role in the constitution of reality” (xxxiii). The intentionality of consciousness, having revolutionized not only philosophy in the twentieth century, but also all domains of scholarship, now shows its limitations. It is incapable of carrying on the conclusive test outlined by Husserl in the early stage of working out his project that would yield the crowning achievement of his quest for the certain and necessary foundation of all knowledge, the “phenomenology of phenomenology” (xxxiii).

Certainly, once the world is understood as *Lebenswelt*, that is “a domain of life,” everything seems to change, because then also the human subject that “constitutes” the manifestation of reality shows that it is rooted in life. As A.-T. Tymieniecka notes, Husserl retained that at this point it was possible to reach the hyletic level of the human subject (Husserl, 1973a: 336–346, 2012: 174–178; Ales Bello, 2005), where consciousness in its primal state before the constitutive process enters into play. However, Elisabeth Ströker already underlined that not even in its most elementary state, constituent consciousness can avoid “rendering” objectuality (1972: 245–257). Tymieniecka added that the hyletic dimension itself, even if pre-constitution, cannot be considered outside the constituent powers of consciousness, as something preceding in the absolute sense this active being of consciousness itself. Tymieniecka acknowledges that it is true that Husserl, with the long itinerary of genetic phenomenology, reached the level of sensation and set it in continuity with that of pure intellectual consciousness, but the passage from the generative level of empirics to that of pure abstract forms remains enigmatic because, even though the objective world is constituted by both forms and degrees, when Husserl asked himself about the sources of the pure forms of consciousness he looked exclusively to their transcendental origin, continuing to omit the fact that “the genetic progress of empiria surges from and obviously stems from origins in nature that are physiological,” inasmuch as they emerge from within environmental conditions and together with them (Tymieniecka, 2011: 4).

Consequently, once again we see the dualism between subject and object in Husserl and Fink’s discussion of the *Sixth Cartesian Meditation*, after their strenuous search for the point of reference from which we may proceed from the lifeworld and accomplish the last founding reduction (Verducci, 2010: 26–29). In the

conferences of Prague and Vienna, Husserl lamented the persistent and unsolved dualism expressed by the “paradox of human subjectivity: being a subject for the world and at the same time being an object in the world”—as reported at §53 of *The Crisis of European Sciences and the Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970: 178), which collects the texts of those conferences (Tymieniecka, 2005: xv).

At this point, even the most devoted follower of Husserl might experience some discomfort. It would seem that the curse of Wilhelm Wundt was once again at work here, damning phenomenological research to spin on its own axis in a spiral of sterile self-referentiality (1910: 511–634).

### 3 Within Ontological Dualism and No Way Out

Husserl could not eliminate the traces of Cartesian dualism. When he came to compare ideas with Descartes in his French homeland, he sought not only to honor him by engaging again in the theoretical form of meditation, but also to radicalize Descartes subjectivistic turn in order to verify whether from the sphere of the thinking substance through phenomenology, he could bridge the transcendental connection with intersubjectivity and extended substance (Cristin, 1994: viii–ix).

Husserl experienced something similar to what Hans Jonas attributes to Descartes. Descartes worked “to drain the spiritual elements off the physical realm” (Jonas, 2001: 13) in order to reinforce the supremacy of the *res cogitans*, by separating it from the *res extensa*. But so doing he also reduced the success chances of the longed-for *mathesis universalis* and deprived himself of the theoretical instrument to restore the lost metaphysical unity between subject and object since, according to Jonas, the just emerged polarity of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* could be overcome only by making it “absorb into a higher unity of existence from which the opposites issue as faces of its being or phases of its becoming” (17). In Descartes, continues Jonas, even if it is interpretable as a transition phase, in the pursuit of a scientifically rigorous ontological reunification, such a procedure obtained the paradoxical effect of marginalizing precisely the living being; this form of being was, instead, crucial for Descartes’ and Husserl’s objective of the *mathesis universalis*, inasmuch as it is the carrier, at various levels, of the actuality of coexistence and synergy of consciousness and world: it is the living being that “makes methodological *epochè* founder on its rock” (18).

Thus it seemed that the pulsating heart of the life of being itself and its spontaneously communicative generative capability became definitively unattainable. And yet, the Ancients were able to grasp it, as Hans Jonas taught (7). Philippe Hadot (1995) also in *Qu’est-ce que la philosophie antique?* highlighted well how much the whole ancient philosophy “ethically” understood itself as “way of life” and “living action.”

But Modernity damaged the Ancient certainty of the living communicative unity among the different levels and forms of being, and since its late Medieval beginning, with the advent of the theory of double truth—which divided truth into two

levels, theoretical and practical, that do not communicate with each other (as noticed by Sergio Landucci in *La doppia verità* (2006))—it deprived the communicating life flow of being in human experience of its natural spontaneity. The so-called dis-communicative ontologies of Modernity have been criticized—apart from some significant exceptions such as Leibniz—for their tendency to inhabit the sphere of abstract speculation and thus deem illusory all experiences that did not possess pre-established transcendental standards. After all, metaphysics—the teaching of which went on until the *Schulphilosophie* of the German Enlightenment (Wundt, 1992) was transferred to Modernity not as living and evermore updating research of the principle of all things, but rather in the “dead” and dis-communicative way of a discipline objectivized in the manuals produced by the Second-Scholastic for a didactical purpose (Courtine, 1990).

Too late was it noted that the surprising scientific and technological progress that began then and continues today, could have developed only because it relied on the mysteriously given but efficient communicative spontaneity of being that Ancient and Medieval traditional philosophy was able to understand and safeguard in its historical flow, in a way that even the rationalistically Modern reductionism could profit from it.

Only in the late Enlightenment, Kant was able to acknowledge in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that the synthetizing process “to unify the manifold of concepts by means of ideas” for a *focus imaginarius* by reason (*Vernunft*) (2007: 533), intrinsically depended on a natural, spontaneous and “irresistible” (*unhaufhaltsam*) force/disposition of reason itself to metaphysics, which he called *metaphysica naturalis* (56).

In this way it became evident that with their own hands Modern people deprived themselves of the enjoyment of spontaneously edifying flow of vital/communicative being which effortlessly kept together subject and object: surrendering to their compulsive enthusiasm for “rebuilding” the whole natural being according to what they presumed to be the true logos, Modern people criticized tradition, but their rationalization of life procured even more sectorialization. In fact, in their analyses of being, they applied only the logic of “instrumental rationality” (*Zweckrationalität*), as Max Weber called it in *Economy and Society* (1978: 24), a strategic or purposive rationality; it is teleological only in a subjective sense (*telos* in an objective sense = *Ziel*) and thus it was voluntaristically and untruthfully used to analyze being. As a result, subject-object dis-communication, growing fragmentation and dis-synergy were produced everywhere: knowledge and actions became increasingly incapable of grasping life, which was perceived as uncontrollable, or, to use a Zygmunt Baumann’s expression, “liquid” (2005). This led to anthropological “disenchantment” (*Entzauberung*) (Weber, 2004: 13), decadence and nihilism of meaning, as Friedrich Nietzsche first foresaw for the Europeans of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (1968: Preface § 2) and as Jürgen Habermas recently pointed out and stigmatized in relation to the uncontrolled power of Niklas Luhmann’s systemic theory of society and culture (1995: 22).

The anthropological identity had been so invaded by this Modern polarization of subject and object, spirit and life, that the same emergence of human free cultural capabilities was considered a mark of dis-communication. For example, Ernst

Cassirer affirmed that man is an *animal symbolicum*: man is endowed with active freedom to create his own socio-cultural world through relationships, communication, interaction and division of work, thus he is capable of going beyond the boundaries of biological needs and practical interests of animal life. Yet, according to Cassirer's *Das Symbolproblem* (1995), exactly because of this cultural capability, man continuously experiences a struggling separation from "natural life" and a loss of "immanence in reality" (2005: 185–186). Moreover, he fears being defeated by the self-destructive tendencies of spirit, a critical force of self-negation that causes man to constantly fight against himself in opposition to life. According to Cassirer, out of the distancing and emancipating process of symbolization emerges, the "tragic mark of the entire cultural development," influenced by the psychological experience in which the movement of the "I" seems to break "on its own creations" and its original vital flow seems to exhaust itself in the measure in which the extent and power of this creation grow (172).

## 4 Communicative Virtues of the Phenomenology of Life

### 4.1 *Life as the Objective Interweaving Between Human Condition and Nature*

On the contrary, the phenomenology of life found out that the function of logic creation and ciphering or symbolization does not belong to the spirit of man in spite of his organic dimension and in dis-communication with it; rather, the creative human condition appears at a certain stage of cosmic evolution and crowns the deterministic autopoietic constructivism of life with the ontopoiesis which "generates being" according to the freedom of the *Imaginatio Creatrix* but, at the same time, maintains close cosmic immanence (Tymieniecka, 1988: 28). As Tymieniecka unveils surprisingly:

the elementary condition of man—the same one through which Husserl and Ingarden attempted in vain to open a breach, extending the expansion of its intentional nexuses and at the same time turning to ante-reduction scientific data—appears to be constituted by the blind element of nature, and yet at the same time this element shows itself to have virtualities for individualization on the vital level and, what is more important, for a specifically human individualization. The latter virtualities we could call 'subliminal spontaneities' (28).

But how could A.-T. Tymieniecka arrive at an intuition of such depth, bringing to light the objective interweaving that holds together the elementary human condition and the blind element of nature?

It was the result of a radical phenomenological reconnaissance, set in motion by Tymieniecka's accepting the challenge, Husserl himself had launched with his "late breakthrough to the plane of nature-life," in order to free himself from "the early theoretic-methodological restrictions that the focus on intentionality [had] imposed on him" (Tymieniecka, 2002: 685b–686a).

According to the typical attitude of feminine thought, oriented primarily to what is alive, as Max Scheler and Edith Stein revealed, Tymieniecka approached phenomenology as an organic phenomenon in vital expansion: it had reached and touched her with its generative/propulsive energy, involving her empathetically in its productive logos. Therefore Tymieniecka spared herself the “effort to interpret phenomenology through its method.” On the contrary, taking up the challenge launched to transcendental phenomenology by Ortega y Gasset, who held that not dead ideas but “life was the theme of our times” (Tymieniecka, 1994: 444, 1997b: ix), she set out on the search for the source of the vitality that had animated Husserl’s inquiry, soon coming to the realization that Husserl, in his complex and fruitful reflective proceeding, didn’t keep to the logic of the “speculative thinker who [extrinsically] seeks to unify his various insights”; rather, to presiding at the succession of phases of the “integral Husserl” (Tymieniecka, 2002: 2b) is the same logos that is at work in the formation of “the planes of human reality” (3a), the living and temporally constructive logos that “carries on the great streaming edifice of life” (Tymieniecka, 2000: 4).

Initiating such novel research, Tymieniecka yielded to the philosophical pressures from, so to speak, the “neophilic” and progressive atmosphere (Caillé, 1997: 13th Thesis) of Pragmatism and Analytical Philosophy that predominated at the American headquarters of the World Phenomenology Institute, for many years located in Belmont, Cambridge, Massachusetts and later moved to Hanover, New Hampshire. In fact, critical questions about the practical value of classic phenomenology compared to contemporary science had been raised by Stephen C. Pepper and Alfred Tarski in the 1960s when Tymieniecka, newly arrived in the States, was reading Husserl’s *Logical Investigations* at the University of California. Thus Tymieniecka herself recalled in a 2008 interview on the occasion of receiving an honorary doctoral degree in philosophy from the University of Bergen in Norway (Torjussen et al., 2008: 25–26).

For this reason, Tymieniecka committed her first studies to achieving the vital-natural rooting for the transcendental consciousness; she overturned the Husserlian assertion of corporeality as the zero-point (*Nullpunkt*) (Husserl, 1989: §41) of the transcendental constitution of the world, focusing on the “own-living-corporeal-conscious” experience (*Leiblich-bewusste*), in which consciousness itself “is corporealized” (*Verleibung*), exhibiting a further and more originary “talent and disposition” (*Uranlage*) (Tymieniecka, 1971: 4–7) that enabled it to enter an intimate relationship with the entire structure of nature (*Naturgefüge*) (2–3). In addition, she relied upon the results of the most recent organic-dynamic psychiatry of Henri Ey (1963) according to which the transcendental consciousness is not closed in its absoluteness, but engages a fruitful relationship with the formative spontaneity (*bildende Spontanität*) of normal and pathological living conscious experience that develops beyond the system of constitution, for example, in the typical elementary formations of the collective imagination or in states of dreaming or mental confusion (Tymieniecka, 1971: 4–7).

Precisely consequent to this openness and contextualization of consciousness and reason in the vaster sphere of investigation that is the “universe of human existence in the unity of all,” within “the unity of everything there is alive” (Tymieniecka, 1986: 9, 1988: 6), Tymieniecka found herself immersed in a completely new phenomenic situation: that of “givenness of life,” as the “vast sweep of the significant modalities enter-

ing into and interplaying in the vertiginous outburst of unfolding forces in the ongoing gigantic play of the manifestation of beingness,” with “all the fragments, sequences, segments of complete constructive processes subject to disruption by unforeseeable conditions and influences” (Tymieniecka, 2000: 3). No exposition following the traditional rules of organization may convey this flood-like concatenation of processes that is life! (5). This “streams in all directions and will at any point refract its modalities and their apparatus into innumerable rays that flow concurrently onward” and therefore requires the engagement of “all modes of human functioning, [not only the rational-intentional ones but] all human involvement in the orbit of life” (3).

## ***4.2 Gaining with the Creative Context of Life Through the Creative Act of the Human Being***

To access the givenness of life, Tymieniecka sought a new “Archimedean point” from where everything is able to find its proper place (Tymieniecka, 1988: 4) and she found it in the creative act of the human being (7).

The phenomenology of life, as realized up to this point, had opened a “vision” unlike the transcendental-structural outlook of classic phenomenology, which begins with the human being as demiurge. Instead, in the phenomenology of life, man is both “caught up in the turmoil of a generating progress” (Tymieniecka, 1986: 10) and at the same time the bearer of the “creative orchestration of human functioning” (Tymieniecka, 1988: 384).

Tymieniecka described the new philosophical position reached in terms of geometry: the plane of the human condition intersects perpendicularly that of the phenomenology of life, since it is by proceeding in the description of the vital flow, understood as evolutive genesis of ever more complex and individualized forms, that one reaches the phase in which the human condition is configured. The human condition is characterized by the presence of original “creative virtualities,” that, starting from themselves, that is, horizontally on their own plane, open the vast kingdom constituted by being’s propensity to undertake projects (Tymieniecka, 1986: vii–viii).

Therefore, it is the phenomenological description of the natural vital flow that shows that “all the modes of life’s forces, forms, energetic complexes [...], synergetic virtualities” reach, in constant auto-individualizing flow, the stage of the human condition, and here are structured according to a new meaningfulness, in the measure to which they pass through the “intergenerative schemas” of that “processor” that is the human person. In other words: the natural vital virtualities, once they have flowed into the level of the individual living human being, continue their development in a sphere where “the [all-embracing] heart of the meaningfulness of life in general” beats (Tymieniecka, 1988: 384); herefrom the natural virtualities are issued as “ciphered” according to the new structure of the meaning of being, always renewing themselves throughout history (Tymieniecka, 2000: 197–205).

Thus, on the one hand, man-source of classic phenomenology, is re-situated within the broader ontological field of inquiry of life and therefore arises from the

tangle of vital networks as the “vortex of the universal sense,” in which the various orders of those networks meet (Tymieniecka, 1986: 11), according to a metaphysical *topos* common to various personalist thinkers, e.g. Maine de Biran, Renouvier, Blondel, Mounier, and Scheler. On the other hand, the vital virtualities of nature, that reach the human level of life and run through it, are “processed” in such a way that on the flow of “constructive advance” of life or autopoiesis, in the wording of the two Chilean neurophysiologists Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1980), the “composition” of a more elevated “style” imposes itself (Tymieniecka, 1988: 384) and becomes an onto-poietic one, which is a style in conformity to the being as “firstness” of the process of creative existential formation that belongs only to the living human being (Tymieniecka, 1996: 15).

On the basis of these descriptions of phenomenology of life, Tymieniecka can observe that:

instead of the field of the life-world assumed as the ultimate ground, even by Merleau-Ponty, yet seen as the expansion of the constitutive, objectifying consciousness which is being restricted to the intellectual surface of life, we gain with the “creative context,” a full-fledged field of philosophical inquiry into Nature, life, its specifically human meaningfulness and the sense of human orbit, in which human functioning is not cut off at source points but stretches in all directions and into all dimensions—is not dwarfed as some or other modality, rational or sensuous, but comprises them all. (Tymieniecka, 1988: 10)

The subject-object dualism thus appears recomposed, at least as a phenomenon, since Tymieniecka has been able to exhibit a real poietic continuity between the constructivism of natural life and the creative evolution of human life.

It was at this point that the onto-poiesis of life as new philosophical paradigm was announced, precisely in the Round Table at the beginning of the Program of The World Phenomenology Institute at the XXth World Congress of Philosophy, in Boston, in August 1998.

Tymieniecka developed from that speech a long and detailed essay, written as a dialogue with such exponents of the so-called “New Science,” as René Thom, Ilya Prigogine, Isabelle Stengers, Alvin Toffler, Stephen Jay Gould, Benoit Mandelbrot (Tymieniecka, 1998: 12–58). She wanted to transmit the idea that “the notion of the onto-poiesis of life, situated within the philosophy of life, its center and its nerve, [...] promises to fulfill the expectation of a new intellectual paradigm”; in fact, it is able to provide the “Prometeian worldview that we seek because we are increasingly aware of the possibilities our powers give us for so transforming nature that we will not be subject to its vicissitude” (15).

## **5 The Unveiling of the Ontopoietic Logos of Life in Its Metaphysical Importance**

Tymieniecka did not stop at this phenomonic level of inquiry. An analogous connection between the transcendental dimension and the life-world had been reached by the same genetic phenomenology of Husserl, as has been seen, but it was

unsatisfactory from the point of view of ultimate foundation of phenomenology. Husserl himself believed that “‘the dream’ of the apodictically certain cognitive ground is *ausgeträumt* (=dreamed)” (Tymieniecka, 2005: xxxiv).

In fact, it is not sufficient to inventory facts or speculate about reasons, because “at its core the project of phenomenology is to reach reality in a way that neither subsumes it within general concepts nor reduces it to elements. It is one attempt to make reality foundational and thought immediate, the better to focus and raise sites, to see reality in the round” (Tymieniecka, 2002: 1b).

Taking her lead from the creative phase of phenomenology, which she herself had initiated, and following the creative act of the human being in its constructive thread, Tymieniecka descended to the plane from which the constructive design of self-individualization in beingness takes off. This is the plane of the logos of life, of the constructive logos that carries the entirety of the givenness discovered on the track of impetus and equipoise; it harnesses the universal becoming into the genesis of self-individualizing beingness as it both participates in the universal flux of life within the world, constituting it, and simultaneously makes it present to itself in innumerable perspectives. Here at the ontopoietic level the logos of phenomenological interrogation as logos of life, losing nothing of its postulated cognitive rigor, does not need any further clarification: it reposes in itself as the ultimate that is absolute because in need of no further “reduction,” being the yield of the very last reduction (Tymieniecka, 2005: xxxviii).

This logico-metaphysical maturation of the phenomenology of life was doubtless also due to the constant and deepened exchanges of A.-T. Tymieniecka and of the World Phenomenology Institute with the more than 1000 years philosophical tradition that has flowed into Italian culture, starting with Parmenides of Elea, passing through Saint Thomas Aquinas, to the more recent forms of *Italian Theory*, as it has been termed by Dario Gentili (2012). This contact provided the phenomenological inquiry of the World Phenomenology Institute with a philosophical anchorage in the tradition of Lovejoy’s (1964) “The Great Chain of Being” strongly implicated by the “Italian Difference” (Chiesa & Toscano, 2009) that today is rightly re-evaluated in many quarters precisely as “living thought,” in the words of Roberto Esposito (2012), as it is the current bearer of the fruit of manifold and complex speculative sedimentations, which elsewhere, instead, were swept away.

But at this point a metaphysical problem arises and Tymieniecka asks herself: “Does this logos stop with the timing of life?” (Tymieniecka, 2007b: 21). Will “the driving force of the logos” that unfolds life in its complete self-individualizing dynamic, be able to conduct it from “the incipient instance of originating life in its self-individualizing process” all the way to “the subsequent striving toward the abyss of the spirit”?

The question is crucial because if the ontopoietic logos of life were qualified to found only the natural dimension and could not bring itself beyond the temporal and chronological constructivism of nature, in the kairic dimension of the freedom of spirit to supernatural eternity, its non-dualistic metaphysical value would be in vain. For this reason Tymieniecka turned her attention once again to the phenomenology of life and the integral ontopoietic dynamic that “the very creative act of the human

being itself” reveals in the degree to which it “brings to the sense-giving apparatus of living being the specifically human virtualities that fashion sensorial, emotional, even pre-experiential material into human constitutive-conscious life-significance” (Tymieniecka, 2005: xxxvi).

She thus focuses attention on the fact that the auto-individualizing logos that is intrinsic to life has manifested itself as “a primogenital force striving without end, surging in its impetus and seeking equipoise”: it promotes “the constructive prompting” that determines “the progress of life” and “it prepares its own means/organs for its own advance.” This advance means the fulfillment of constructive steps toward transformations, that is: “step by step unfolding projects of progressive conversion of constructive forces into new knots of sense.” Therefore, “the crucial factum of life” has not appeared without reason, “brought [...] out of ‘nowhere’”; on the contrary, the “logoic force of life has its purpose”—just like Schelling’s living nature, that embodies the “scheme of freedom”—and that purpose reveals itself to be achieved in an ontopoietic way inasmuch as it expresses itself “in preparing scrupulously in a long progression the constructive route of individualizing life so that *Imaginatio Creatrix* emerges as an autonomous modality of force with its own motor, the human will.” Crowning its development, “the force of the logos of life,” with the will as new modality of force, finds itself able to advance “from the vital/ontopoietic round of significance into two new dominions of sense”: that of the creative/spiritual and that of the sacred.

In the terms of traditional ontology, this means that “‘substances’ undergo a ‘transubstantial’ change” and also that “the inner modality of the logoic force undergoes an essential transmutation.” Therefore, “life, [...] as a manifestation of the ontopoietic process [...] is far from a wild Heraclitean flux, for it articulates itself.” In addition and first of all, “[life] ‘times’ itself” (Tymieniecka, 2007b: 20), because time reveals itself as “the main artery through which life’s pulsating propensities flow, articulating themselves, intergenerating” (Tymieniecka, 1997b: 4).

Therefore the ontopoietic logos of life is characterized in an entirely original way compared to any other previously theorized: in fact, it is metamorphic, inasmuch as, while maintaining constant its being and its essential auto-individualizing function, it varies its own form to remain immanent to the vectors in which it expresses itself each time, for example the laws of physics, animal instinct, or creative imagination. For this reason, the ontopoietic logos of life is endowed with a sentient nature; it is through the sentience of the logos which permeates all the functional moves of the unfolding life and in which the constructive designs are processed, that a continuity is maintained throughout (Tymieniecka, 2007b: 31).

In such a metamorphic sentient capacity that intrinsically qualifies the ontopoietic logos of life, there is the possibility for “the new metaphysical panorama” (Tymieniecka, 2009: xxv), through which we can transcend “the timeless pattern of surrender to nature” and going beyond “the equipoise established through millennia of life between nature and human beings and between the gifts of nature and their use by living beings” (Tymieniecka, 2000: 99) also establishing new nexuses between time as Chronos and Kairos (Tymieniecka, 1997b: 4). The fulcrum of this metamorphosis is that “unique phase of evolutive transmutation” in which the “mature” phase of the platform of life manifests an extraordinary character and

gives rise to the Human-Condition within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive (Tymieniecka, 2007b: 31). The essential differentiation of the human condition amid the unity of life is “a watershed event, essentially a transformation of the significance of life”: it brings with itself the “enigmatic” surging of *Imaginatio Creatrix* in the middle of onto-poietic sequence, surging freely as it floats above the inner working of nature (31).

Here we reach—observes Tymieniecka—the most surprising turn of logos of life, because this great shift was being prepared by the logos’ constructive steps, starting at the very beginning of self-individualizing of life, but it produces a “countervailing move,” that “brings about a complete conversion of its hold on life’s individualization and opens the entire horizon of freedom” (32).

*Imaginatio Creatrix*, rooted within the functioning of Nature-life and yet an autonomous sense giver, introduces three new sense giving factors: the intellectual sense, the aesthetic sense, and the moral sense. The moral sense lies at the core of the metamorphosis of the life situation from vital existence into the advent of Human Condition (33): “Indeed”—Tymieniecka exclaims—“through the moral and entirely freely chosen work of the conscience, the self-enclosed onto-poietic course may be undone and remolded in a free redeeming course!” (60).

The logos of life has lead us to a borderline place between the onto-poietic logos of life and logos’ sacral turn toward territory that is beyond the reach of the logos of the vital individualization of beingness (60). It is here that the Great Metamorphosis takes place: “Ontopoiesis carries its own necessities and opens to the transformative advance of the Great Metamorphosis that completes life’s meaning in a transition from temporal life to a-temporality, or better, hyper-temporality” (67).

All told, concludes A.-T. Tymieniecka, engaging the vast problem of the “evolving God,” “what in the cognitive-intellective perspective of human mind appears [...] to be the greatest human “folly,” an absurdity and something impossible for sober reason to accept, is a revelation by the logos of life/sacral logos within our now completed human experience of nothing less than the reason of all reasons” (70).

## 6 Conclusion

Through this *excursus* upon the thought of A.-T. Tymieniecka, in order to highlight the passages that enabled her to re-unite not only the subject-object dualism, but also many of the disconnections that we have inherited from Modernity, we have encountered a “first philosophy” directed to the objective of “theorizing” the overall phenomenon of the new “fullness of the Logos in the key of Life.” What has thrown itself wide open before us is a path of theoretical research that we did not believe existed, on which instead we can adventurously embark, renewing the instance of Kant’s Enlightenment: “dare to know!” We now catch sight of a unitary logos leading us, that animates the Parmenidean sphere and the same absolute Hegelian Spirit and that, self-individualizing through onto-poiesis, shows it is intrinsically able to connect phenomena emerging bit by bit from the inorganic to the organic, to the

human. It weaves a “metapoietic” network of innumerable metamorphic passages of transcendence, that open it in the direction of the divine, newly risen to sight, according to the perspective of *philosophia perennis*, delineated by G. W. Leibniz, when, to rationally understand the truth of the propositions of fact, he introduced the principle of sufficient reason, which, while establishing a foundational dynamics tending toward the infinite, made it possible to construct a solid ladder of truth in order to always better rise to the fullness of the logos, A.-T. Tymieniecka explains in *The Case of God in the New Enlightenment*.

With the phenomenology of life of A.-T. Tymieniecka we are not dealing with a complete and concluded philosophical system, in which the new problems about the environment, development and post-humanism can already find adequate and stable collocation. Do not forget, on the other hand, that the same metaphysical tradition spent many centuries for structuring and stabilizing.

However, Tymieniecka is not unaware that we are in front of an unprecedented expansion of human life, that asks to be faced with an equally new and broadened horizon of meaning. In her talk at the International Conference on “The Development in Question. The Human Forms of Transformation,” held in Falconara Marittima, Italy, in November 2006, organized by Professor Francesco Totaro of the Department of Philosophy and Human Sciences of the University of Macerata, A.-T. Tymieniecka asserted that we are in front of an “evolution of the human individual who appears to be already endowed with consciousness greatly enlarged compared to humans of one hundred years ago and appears also to have found the secret of further, seemingly infinite, expansion of human potential” (Tymieniecka, 2007a: 15).

Such expansion—she continued—manifests itself not only within the individual but in the transformative progress of the entire life’s and world’s network. Each day we are faced with new inventions and turns of mind. We presume an infinite progress ahead. This progress creates new demands upon the individual and society as well as creating new problems which society will have to solve. Ever new sources of force emerge and the human being believes to be able—as master—to foresee and control their effects to lead their course. Yet, like the sorcerer’s apprentice, having found the key to release the current of power, human beings do not possess either the key to stop the course nor entirely control its achievements. They remain always subject to the whims of natural, cosmic and human forces. This course involves not only individual natural endowment and inclinations but the entire network of sharing-in-life within the circumambient and further circles. It depends upon ontopoietic fitting directions, ontopoietic rules of the circumambient contexts, on the one hand, and the individual creative genius, on the other.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to address the question: “how to master the routes of the human development within the individual as well as within its interactive world, society, culture while navigating upon the stormy sea between and among conflicting forces without a compass.” Our presentation intends merely to take up the ontopoietic groundwork of A.-T. Tymieniecka’s phenomenology of life and to draw from it some essential indications. That is by Tymieniecka’s words:

in order to control in some way the flux of human development for its existential advantage, human being has to assume a special frame of mind. Keeping in sight the onto-poietic groundwork sketched above, human calculation and balancing out of life's conditions should be handled according to it with measure, proportion and temperance. (Tymieniecka, 2007a: 15–16)

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# Otherness and the Case of the Animal-Human: Interrogating the Post-human from Tymieniecka's Ontopoiesis Multilayered Organization of Life



Sergio Labate

*As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called animal offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say the bordercrossing from which vantage man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself (Derrida, 2009: 49).*

## 1 Introduction

Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka introduces an immanentist critics to Levinas's positions in a famous article published in 1977 in the closing volume of *Analecta Husserliana*, which was opened with a text by Emmanuel Levinas. I have chosen this thread as the main theme of my article (Tymieniecka, 1977: 151).

It is useful to remember that this intervention—originally held in Levinas's presence in 1975—is almost contemporary with the publication of Levinas's most challenging book, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (Levinas, 1974). In his opening speech at the 1975 conference, Levinas concisely develops the theses published in this book.

The phenomenological core, which Levinas highlights in his speech, is the recognition—well outlined in the “wrong” interpretation of Husserl's phenomenology in his early works—that the real meaning of phenomenology takes place within a dimension which cannot be understood by the immanence of consciousness, but it breaks with the essence of knowledge itself (with the essence itself *as* knowledge).

In Mikel Dufrenne's initial quotation “... *l'immediat, ce qui se dit dans le poème/ en deçà d'une censure ou d'un contrôle./ (Restera à savoir si tout contrôle est/exclu,*

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